

Montana Library Network

Discussion draft for Network Advisory Council

January 21, 2021

What is the Montana Library Network (MLN)?

A collaborative community of Montana libraries working together to provide all Montanans with library content and services sufficient unto their needs.

Key principles of MLN:

- Our success is measured by our users' successes.
- Collaboration makes our services efficient.
- Local librarians know best the needs of their communities, and how to meet these needs.
- We learn from others.
- We are future focused. We work to improve what we do and how we do it, focusing on the present and future needs of our communities.
- We explore, try, test, pilot, and adapt to new and changing programs and services.
- Montana libraries decide how or if they participate in MLN.

Why is MLN necessary and why now?

- Twenty-first century libraries serve their communities differently than did libraries in the past. Society has changed, as have the means by which we manage information and support life-long learning. To meet our evolving communities' needs, our services are evolving, often merging, to better address our users' needs. For Montanans, their libraries' services increasingly rely on statewide (or larger) cooperation. In addition, library services are becoming more convenient and useful.
- While Montana libraries have long worked cooperatively, it's time to reexamine, and if appropriate, improve how we work together.

- Montana librarians are talking with one another about how our communities are changing, and about how we address these changes with evolving services.
- We constantly strive to use resources more efficiently and effectively.
- To make better decisions, libraries constantly seek more accurate, timely, and complete data about their communities and Montana.
- Deliberative planning and evaluation make it possible to maximize the value of Montana libraries for their communities.
- We work together to serve all Montanans.
- Montana State Library's advisory groups are key to MSL's success, the success of Montana libraries, and the success of Montanans. As such, we are working to help them become more agile, and provide them with more resources and responsibility.
- A unified Montana library network helps libraries enrich their roles within their communities.

What does the MLN look like?

- Every Montanan has access to sufficient library services.
- Montana libraries engage all their community members, with programs and services addressing the needs of frequent and less-frequent library users. No one in their communities are ignored; all are included.
- Librarians are aware of, and direct patrons to, services offered by other Montana libraries that might not be offered locally.
- Montana librarians engage with one another to share ideas, expertise, opportunities, and concerns.
- Montana libraries work together to achieve collaborative public library standards.
- Librarians and library board members advocate for their library, locally and statewide.

- Statewide, librarians and library board members communicate and help one another.
- Wherever possible services are delivered through a collaborative infrastructure of core services that scale to meet the needs of all Montanans. These core services are those in which the State Library invests state and federal dollars.
- MSL invests state and federal revenues so that every Montana library has affordable access to a core group of services. The intent is to more efficiently and effectively meet the needs of all Montana's communities.
- Examples of core services might include (thought must be given to how best to fund these services though funding should not be a barrier to our commitment):
 - A shared library management system
 - Shared e-resources and e-resource platforms
 - Resource sharing services including ILL, holds fulfillment, and a courier
 - A shared cultural resources platform
 - Collaborative collection management including collection development, acquisition, materials processing, and cataloging
 - Scalable programming to support lifelong learning and community needs
 - Internet access to and through libraries
 - Shared data metrics and analytics
 - Shared publicity and promotion

MSL's role in the MLN is to:

- Provide technical support, system administration, procurement, contract administration, partnership development, service exploration and development, consulting, continuing education, and funding.

- Identify and invest federal, state, local, and private dollars in the core services of MLN.
- Support a platform to track and inform the public and library community about unique and shared library services.
- Seek advice and direction from within and outside the library community.
- Act in the best interest of Montana libraries.

The Network Advisory Council (NAC) is a small committee of thought leaders that advance the vision of the MLN.

The NAC's role in the MLN is to:

- Articulate the successful outcomes of MLN that will help us to continually evaluate our success, adapting as necessary.
- Identify, prioritize and evaluate shared services that will best achieve the fair library access resolution.
- Identify the gaps in achieving the fair library access resolution.
- Consider core services holistically, understanding that in most instances these services depend one upon the other.
- Recommend to the State Library how best to invest resources (including time and money) to effectively deliver core services.
- Help MSL and Montana libraries identify short and long term goals, including development of the LSTA 5-year plan.

NAC subcommittees are made up of subject matter experts and support specific core services. Each subcommittee meets at least annually to evaluate the success of the services for which they are responsible however it is likely that subcommittees will meet more frequently to consider questions of importance related to those core services.

NAC subcommittees role in the MLN is to:

- Develop and maintain necessary policies and workflows to ensure effective core service delivery.
- Identify both short and long-term success measures for core services and continue to refine those measures overtime.
- Identify data and other means to evaluate success.
- Consider how to deliver core services for all patron types and across all library types.
- Identify opportunities to continue to improve service delivery through deeper collaboration, new technologies, partnerships, etc., always with an eye to measures of success.
- Serve on RFP committees and provide similar administrative support when necessary.
- Identify funding needs and future funding goals.
- Be a resource for the NAC and MSL to understand the impact of circumstances such as the pandemic on our resources and services.

The NAC should consider the input from the subcommittees collectively and should advise MSL and Montana libraries about opportunities to advance service models, work and funding priorities.

Where do the current advisory and executive groups fit?

The structure of the current advisory and executive groups would be dissolved. Those decisions made by committees that may not be specific to any one committee will fall under the auspices of the Network Advisory Council. For example, establishment of a single cost share formula could be a role of the NAC. Policy questions that are about specific core services would be made by core service subcommittees. For example, cataloging best practices currently established for the MSC by the MSC content management committee but that are applicable to all libraries could be made by a subcommittee of subject matter experts that includes members of MSC and non-MSL libraries. Platform specific questions would be made by work groups when necessary but to the extent that

questions may influence decisions or behaviors beyond a specific platform those questions should be elevated to the appropriate subcommittee or the NAC.

What results should Montana expect from development of the MLN?

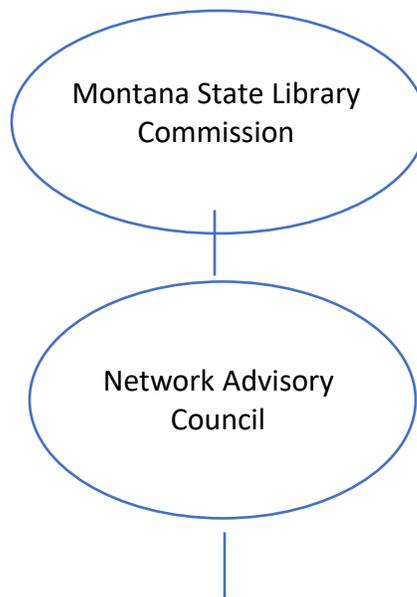
- Services recommended by the NAC will receive MSL support through staff and funding as available.
- By considering services and their impact on users, MSL and Montana libraries will be better positioned to evaluate systemic impacts for patrons and on library services.
- We will be able to evaluate opportunities for continuous improvement through short and long term goals.
- We will be better informed about where to prioritize scarce resources.
- We will have data and anecdotal information to answer questions about where we need help and what comes next.
- Montana librarians will be more engaged in the advancement of library services in Montana.
- Montana will grow a community of thought leaders.

How does MLN align with MSL's strategic framework?

MLN aligns with all three strategies of the [MSL strategic framework](#):

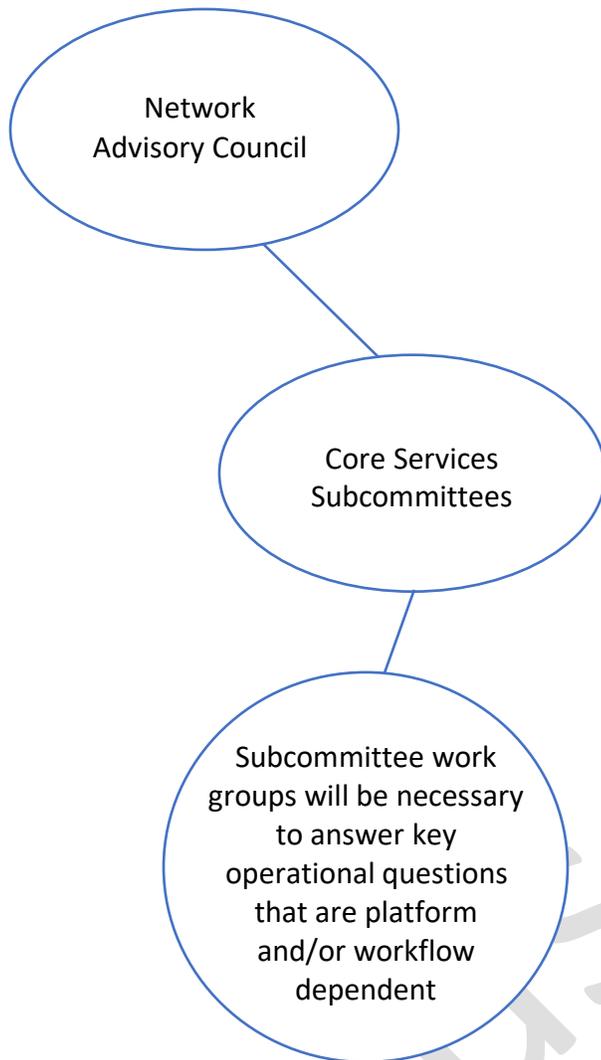
- With its focus on core services and collaboration, MLN is the information infrastructure for Montana libraries.
- By more effectively executing and administering these core services, MSL and Montana libraries will better leverage and maximize scarce financial resources. Also, importantly, this holistic approach to administering core services will give MSL better information about the true costs of MLN and will create the basis for more deliberate and better-informed funding requests.
- By deliberating thinking about MLN as described, MSL and the library community will be better positioned to identify and develop strategic partnerships that improve service delivery and outcomes for Montanans.

The NAC, with input from the MT Library Community, identifies and recommends core library services of MLN to address Montanans information needs. They will consider core services holistically, prioritize services, assist with evaluating services, identify gaps in service delivery and barriers that prevent the realization of the intent of the fair library access resolution, make decisions and recommend funding priorities to fund current and future services and help MSL and Montana Libraries plan.



DRAFT MLN Core Services

- A shared library management system
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- Scalable programming to support lifelong learning and community needs
- Internet access to and through libraries
- Shared data metrics and analytics
- Shared publicity and promotion
- Other user-defined needs
- Shared consulting, learning, and administrative services that support and improve library services to Montanans



Core Services Subcommittees are the subject matters experts that are able to more clearly define the scope of MLN core services and funding needs, determine service delivery policies and models, create metrics to evaluate the success of the services, help to gather data in support of the metrics using data to evaluate the success of the services, consider future changes in user needs, advances in technology, opportunities for collaboration, and other drivers that might influence these services over time, and participate in procurements and other administrative processes

The work of the subcommittees involves services, not platforms.